

IS ŚAṆKHACŪḌA A HINDU HERO?

(A note on the *Nāgānanda*)*

The *Nāgānanda*, the «Joy of Serpents», the play written by Harṣa or Śrīharṣadeva (6th-7th A.D.), which is a harmonious synthesis of Buddhism and Hinduism, develops the tale of Jimūtavāhana, a prince of the Vidyādhara, who embodies the figure of the Bodhisattva and sacrifices his own life to save Śaṅkhacūḍa, a young prince of the Nāgas, "Serpents", destined to be slaughtered by Garuḍa, the mythical king of the "Birds", who is a very fierce enemy of theirs¹.

* This study is included in a research effected with a CNR contribution and a MURST (40%) fund.

1. A full bibliography on the *Nāgānanda* is provided by R. Steiner, published in *The Nāgānanda* Ed. by Madhava Candra Ghōṣa assisted by Kṛṣṇa Kamala Bhaṭṭācārya, With a general introduction by M. Hahn and a preface and a bibliography of the editions and translations of the *Nāgānanda* by R. Steiner, Delhi, 1991, but see also Harṣa, *La gioia dei serpenti (Nāgānanda)*, ed. by A. Pellegrini Sannino, to be published by Paideia, Brescia. Anyhow it seems appropriate to mention here - because they will often be cited -, the precise, even though ancient, preface by F. CIMMINO, in his translation of the *Nāgānanda*, published in 1903 (Remo Sandron ed., Milano-Palermo-Napoli) with the title *Nāgānanda o Il Giubilo dei Serpenti* and preceded a short time before by F. CIMMINO'S studies "Une communication sur le Drame *Nāgānanda*", in «*Ver-handlungen des XIII Internz. Orientalistischen-Kongress*» (Hamburg, september 1902), Leiden, 1904, pp. 31-32 and "Sul dramma *Nāgānanda* o Giubilo dei Serpenti", in «AAN» (Atti della Reale Accad. di Arch. Lettere ed Arti di Napoli o Atti dell'Acc. di Scienze Politic. S.N. della Soc. di Lettere ed Arti di Napoli) 22 (1902), pp. 155-182; the introductions by R.D. KARMARKAR, *Nāgānanda*

Nevertheless, when we read the *Nāgānanda*, we are surprised to see, besides Jīmūtavāhana, a pattern of all virtues such as compassion, tolerance, pity and so on, Śaṅkhacūḍa's character who, in the last two acts, because of his loyalty, moral qualities and ethical endowments, appears, at first sight, almost to compete with Jīmūtavāhana for the leading role. There is no doubt that Jīmūtavāhana's character concerns the play in its wholeness, but, even if Śaṅkhacūḍa's appearance is more limited in this play, Śaṅkhacūḍa's character, due to his noble-mindedness and deep feelings, leaves in the end a very deep impression. Therefore, it is not surprising if, in most cases, the scholars, who have been interested in the *Nāgānanda*¹, almost wondering – as the *vetāla* does in the version included in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*² –,

of Śrīharṣa, ed. with a complete Transl. into English, notes (critical and explanatory) introduction and Appendices, 3rd ed. Poona, 1953 [1st ed. 1919]; by A.V. TORASKAR-N.A. DESHPANDE, *Nāgānand of Harshadev, ed. with a compl. engl. transl., Introd., exhaustive notes, sanskrit commentary of late M.R. Kale and useful Appendices*, Bombay, 1953, and by B. KUN BAE, *Śrī Harṣa's Plays*, New York, 1964. See, finally, the study (very original in its formulation) by DESHPANDE-KULKARNI, *Guide to Nāgānanda, in full questions & answers* (The popular Book Store, Educational publishers & booksellers), Surat, undated. The text I have adopted here is the edition by Saṃsāracandra, *Śrīharṣapranīta, Nāgānandanāṭakam*, 2nd Delhi, 1986 [1st 1970].

2. To tell the truth, the tale of Jīmūtavāhana appears, actually twice, both in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (22=IV,2 e 90=XII,23) by Somadeva Sūri (XI century) and in the *Brhatkathāmañjarī* (4,49 ff.; 9,766 ff.) by Kṣemendra (XI century). These works, as everybody knows, are almost the Sanskrit epitomes of the Guṇāḍhya's *Brhatkathā*, a work of the I century A.D., written in *paśācī* language and which has been lost: therefore it is likely to have been the source of the two above-mentioned works and of the *Nāgānanda*, even if, as R.Steiner thinks, it is possible that the source of Harṣa's play is rather a kashmir śaiva-coloured version of Guṇāḍhya's work (see R. STEINER, "Zur Akteinleitung von Harṣadevas *Nāgānanda*", in BEI 9 [1991], pp. 203-216, particularly p. 206 and note 9). Besides, about the origin «forse da una saga dardica o kāfira» - that is to say from the regions lying to the north-west of India - of the Jīmūtavāhana's tale and, furthermore, about the historical vicissitudes that it would symbolize, see D. FAILLA, *Garuḍa e i Nāga, Immagini, forme e simboli di antiche storie di ratto*, Genova, 1982, pp. 71 ff.). The story developed in the *Nāgānanda* coincides especially with the narration appearing in *Kathās*. 90 (=XII, 23), namely in the book of the *vetāla* (chapters 75-99), a poetical version of the *Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā*, which is also contained in the Kṣemendra's *Brhatkathāmañjarī* (9,2,19-1221). Obviously, the Jīmūtavāhana's tale appears - as the fifteenth story of the lemur, but in a very concise form - also in the *Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā*, that has reached us as an autonomous work in three different recensions, among which maybe the version of Śivadāsa (a prose work, where some lines are inserted and probably not preceding the XII century), is nearest to the original text (see *Die*

«which of those two was superior in fortitude»³ –, concluded – in last analysis conforming themselves to king Trivikramasena's answer⁴ – that Śaṅkhacūḍa is “superior” or “higher” than Jīmūtavāhana, because the latter is «a professional in the art of sacrificing one's life for the sake of others», while the former is «a mere amateur»⁵.

But the intention of making a classification of value was, in my opinion, far from Harṣa's mind; actually, if the question was already in his source, he, taking advantage of the opportunity that was offered to him, used it, but not to stimulate such an answer. I think so, not only because he does not explicitly ask a question (as it happens in the *Kathās.*), but also because there is nothing which let us imagine that Harṣa's aim is to provoke a contraposition or just to draw a parallel between these two characters⁶: if we carefully observe the play,

Vetālapañcaviṇṭikā in den Recensionen des Čivadāsa u. eines Ungenannten, hrgs. von H. UHLE, Leipzig, 1881, in «Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes» VIII, 1 [1884], repr. Nendeln [Liechtenstein], 1966, and *Vetālapantschavinsatī, Die Fünfundzwanzig Erzählungen eines Dämons, Eingeleitet durch: Der König mit dem Leichnam* von H. ZIMMER, Darmstadt, 1966, pp. 82-91).

3. In *Kathās.* XII, 90, 203, the vampire or *vetāla* indeed asks king Trivikramasena: *tad brūhi śaṅkhacūḍaḥ kiṃ vā jīmūtavāhanaḥ 'bhyadhikah/ sattvena taylor ubhayoḥ [...]* («So tell me which of those two was superior in fortitude, Śaṅkhacūḍa or Jīmūtavāhana?»). The adopted text is edited by H. BROCKHAUS, *Kathā Sarit Sāgara, Die Märchensammlung des Somadeva* (Buch IX-XVIII), hrgs. von H. Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1966, in «Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes», IV, 5(1866), repr. Nendeln [Liechtenstein], 1966, pp. 350-359, of which I follow the numbering too, that is to say, *lambaka* XII e *taraṅga* (global) 90; it forms at the same time the *taraṅga* 23 within the *lambaka* XII: that explains the other numbering mentioned above, that is followed, for example, in the very recent translation edited by F. BALDISSERA, V. MAZZARINO and M.P. VIVANTI, *Somadeva, L'Oceano dei fiumi dei racconti*, 2 vols., Torino, 1993, in particular for this version of the tale, vol. II, pp. 1031-1042.

4. *Kathās.* XII, 90, 205: *bahujanmasiddham etac citraṃ jīmūtavāhanasya kiyat / ślāghyas tu śaṅkhacūḍo [...]* «What great astonishment causes this virtue acquired by Jīmūtavāhana in many births? But Śaṅkhacūḍa really deserves to be praised...».

5. See R.D. KARMAKAR: *thus ranking Śaṅkhacūḍa even higher than Jīmūtavāhana on the grounds that the latter was a professional in the art of sacrificing one's life for the sake of others, while the former was a mere amateur* (op. cit., p. xxxv); DESHPANDE-KULKARNI: *Śaṅkhacūḍa is another great dramatic person as equal as Jīmūtavāhana or nay - even superior to him* (op. cit., p. 36) or A.V. TORASKAR- N.A. DESHPANDE: *The character of Shaṅkhachūḍa [...] is at times even more admirable than that of the hero* (op. cit., p. 20)

6. To tell the truth, also F. Cimmino more cautiously remarked: «E il dialogo

Śaṅkhacūḍa's character is not superior to Jīmūtavāhana's one, but different, since the ideology which inspires Śaṅkhacūḍa and which he wants to convey is different. Namely, it seems to me that for Harṣa, while Jīmūtavāhana is a Bodhisattva, and therefore a representative of the Buddhistic ideology, Śaṅkhacūḍa is not indeed a «mere amateur», but rather the symbol of the Hindu ideology.

That is obvious if we compare the *Nāgānanda* to *Kathāsaritsāgara*. Of course, one can object – and it is somewhat difficult or, to be more precise, impossible to meet this objection – that this characterization of the characters could already have been in the original, which both *Nāgānanda* and *Kathāsaritsāgara* result from and which, according to R.Steiner⁷, would have had a śaiva colouring. Therefore, may be this characterization is not due wholly to Harṣa and it, on the other hand, could have been simplified in Somadeva Sūri's work owing to his more rapid and concise style. Anyway, the parallel can suggest some interesting remarks: at least, even if such a characterization was in the source, Harṣa's sensibility, that was probably different to Somadeva Sūri's sensibility, was however able to perceive it and make it his own.

It is difficult not to refer Śaṅkhacūḍa's utmost attachment and devotion to his duty to Hinduism: the figure, which emerges from the *Nāgānanda* is, indeed, that of a prince who takes the destiny of his race deeply at heart. The trait is in common with the *Kathāsaritsāgara*; however, in the *Nāgānanda*, it is pointed out with very different emphasis: Śaṅkhacūḍa wants to offer himself to Garuḍa not only – as in *Kathās*. XII,90,161 – not to sink «in the mire of dishonour»⁷, but also because this is his duty, since this is the will of his king. It seems that his bitter consideration: «The great glory of having saved the serpents was not achieved by me, nor again the praise-worthy command of [my] king was carried out»⁸, betrays the idea that individual duty is

segue sempre con la stessa altezza di sentimento fra l'eroe e il Nāga; [...] al punto che ben difficile a risolversi doveva essere la quistione proposta in fine della novella sul medesimo argomento, se, cioè, fosse di più eccellente animo l'eroe G' jīmūtavāhana o il Nāga Ṣaṅkhac' ūḍa» (*op. cit.*, «Prefazione», p. L).

7. See *Kathās*. XII, 90, 161: [...] *majjeyaṃ nāyaśaḥpaṅke jīvantaṃ cet tam āpnuyām* «[...] If I find him alive, I shall escape sinking in the mire of dishonour».

8. *Nāg*. V,8: *nāhitrāṇāt kīrtirekā mayāptā nāpi ślāghyā svāmīno 'nuṣṭhitājñā*; see also *Nāg*. IV, 8/9; 16/17; V, 20.

part of a more wide universal duty and failing in the former entails the overturning of the latter. This reminds us of the *Bhagavadgītā* where the idea of the need to fulfil one's duty in view of a wider cosmic order attains its more coherent formulation by turning into one of the fundamental pillars of the hindu ethics; not only of the hindu ethics, but also of the society, cementing the caste's system in which only the act fulfilled respecting the duties of one's own caste, is the warrant of improving oneself in the next life.

Well, Śaṅkhacūḍa appears very different from Jīmūtavāhana who, indeed, fails in his duty, abandoning his people because he wants to follow his father who has decided to lead an ascetic life and has retired to an hermitage in the Malaya mountain with his wife. However, notwithstanding this, from a different point of view, Jīmūtavāhana's character is not devoid of coherence. He is, indeed, a Bodhisattva and, consequently, he is not under the necessity of fulfilling the caste's duties, since even the idea of caste – at least, from a theoretical point of view – is rejected by Buddhism; besides, if for the Bodhisattva the aims in life are to perform the salvation of creatures and to practise an ethical life imbued with compassion (*karuṇā*) and with pity (*maitrī*) towards all human beings, without taking into account the different social subdivisions they belong to and that are part of the hindu ideology, the attachment to the reign is, after all, a form of attachment to worldly goods, that, by nature, are temporary and, consequently, are the source of every sorrow. Therefore Jīmūtavāhana has an ethics of his own, that, in its coherence, is fully justifiable; it does not coincide with the Śaṅkhacūḍa's ethics, but it cannot be considered lower. It is merely different. And in the *Nāgānanda* this diversity stands out very well; much more than in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*.

Śaṅkhacūḍa's attachment to his own duty is actually one of the most evident traits of the diversity of the two characters, so much so that it has been pointed out by the various scholars⁹, and they have also grasped Jīmūtavāhana's inability to be a good king¹⁰, but, in my

9. See, for example, DESHPANDE-KULKARNI, *op. cit.*, p. 36; TORASKAR-N.A. DESHPANDE, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

10. In particular, cf. DESHPANDE-KULKARNI, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

opinion, the two characterizations must be closely compared with one another. On the contrary, there are other less evident elements that are contained in some passages that should be carefully examined because, reading between the lines, I think they reveal Śāṅkhacūḍa's appurtenance – and not only Śāṅkhacūḍa's – to the purest Hinduism.

I must state beforehand there is nothing, in the *Nāgānanda*, that betrays a Śāṅkhacūḍa's appurtenance to the Buddhistic ideology: neither any explicit or implicit reference, nor least of all any doctrinarian enunciation which, on the other hand, are very limited even by Jīmūtavāhana himself, since Harṣa's play is not a work for buddhistic propaganda purposes at all. It is true that the dialogical style and the more diffused narrative form of the *Nāgānanda* give a larger space to the characters allowing us to understand their ideas much better than the concise prose of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, but, none of the few doctrinarian statements, that are put into Śāṅkhacūḍa's mouth, allow us to lead him to the Buddhistic sphere, not even *Nāg.* IV, 8:

*kroḍī karoti prathamam yadā jātam anityatā /
dhātrīva jananī paścāt tadā śokasya kaḥ kramah //*

(«Since Transitoriness first embraces the new born [child], and then the mother [embraces], like a nurse, what reason is there for grieving?»), where namely – in the first part of the verse – there is an allusion to the idea that the transitoriness assails everything: as everybody knows, the Buddhistic doctrine is based on this idea. But, as transitoriness assails everything, namely all men, every affection and all feelings, it is, according to Buddhism, the cause of all sorrows; actually, Buddha's "illumination" is realized when he perceived this close connection between transitoriness and sorrow, so much so that it inspires the first of the "four Truth" that he enunciated¹¹. So, if we

11. About Buddhism, see (in addition to the works of S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *La filosofia indiana. Dal Veda al Buddhismo*, ed. it. Torino, 1974 [1st London, 1923]; H. von GLASENAPP, *Le religioni dell'India*, ed. it. Torino, 1963 [1st Stuttgart, 1956]; ID. *Le Filosofie dell'India*, ed. it. Torino, 1962 [1st Stuttgart, 1948] and G. SCALABRINO BORSANI, "Filosofia dell'India", in *Storia della filosofia*, directed by M. Dal Pra, vol. I, Milano, 1975-76, pp. 427-523), in particular G. TUCCI, *Buddhismo*, Foligno, 1926; and O. BOTTO, *Buddha e Buddhismo*, Fossano (Cuneo), 1974, repr. 1984.

look at the expression *tadā śokasya kaḥ kramah*, at the end of the verse, the passage has nothing to do with Buddhism. Therefore, while I happen to think that Śāṅkhacūḍa, if he had been a representative of the Buddhistic ideology, would not have had a better opportunity of doing a doctrinarian enunciation, it is my impression that he would more merely convey an idea that is, after all, more universally hindu: men are subject to death, to transitoriness; the loss of the objects of affection is part of the transitoriness and, therefore, it must not cause grief.

At first sight, *Nāg.* IV, 20 too, where we read:

*samutpatsyāmahe mātār yasyām yasyām gatau vayam /
tasyām tasyām priyasute mātā bhūyās tvam eva naḥ //*

(«In whatever state [of life] we may be born again, O mother, you who loves her son, in every one [of those conditions], you alone may become my mother!»), would not seem very explicit. But, on the contrary, I think that this passage clearly expresses Śāṅkhacūḍa's appurtenance to Hinduism. Given that Śāṅkhacūḍa's assertion has no pendant in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, not even in a synthetic form, it stands to reason that here the word *gati-*, «state [of life], condition» alludes to the doctrine of the rebirths (*saṃsāra*). But, which conception of the doctrine of rebirths is outlined here? Is it the typical conception of the brahmanic ideology or is it the buddhistic one? If we examine *gati-*, it is difficult to make a decision. The word *gati-*, precisely means «going, moving, course, path, way» (< *gam-*, «to go, to move»). Almost unknown to the *Ṛgveda*, where it appears only once¹², the term is widely used in the *Upaniṣads* and in later hindu texts, where, except when it appears in its literal meaning, it is set to Brahman itself as the «goal», the «refuge», the «aim», the final «condition» to which the individual Self «attains»¹³ or it signifies one of the possible «con-

12. *RV.*, V, 64, 3; cf. H. GRASSMANN, *WB zum Rig-Veda*, Leipzig, 1873, s.v.

13. See *BUp.* IV, 3, 32; *KUp.* II, 3, 10; *BhG.* VII, 18; VIII, 13; IX, 32; XII, 5; XIII, 28; XVI, 22-23. I cite, as an example, *KUp.* I, 3, 11: [...] *puruṣān na paraṃ kiñcit. sā kaṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ* «[...] There is nothing higher than the Spirit: That is the goal, that is the supreme refuge». But see also *BhG.* VIII, 21 *avyakto 'kṣara ity uktas*

ditions» of rebirth of the «self» in the cycle of the *samsāra*¹⁴. Therefore, it is perhaps not rash to suppose – since the doctrine of *samsāra* and the law of *karman* find their first formulation in the *Upaniṣads* – that the term *gati*-, that was immediately considered very appropriate, in the brahmanic environment, to suggests the idea of «way», and then of transmigration, of «path» of the «self», entailed from the beginning, in this meaning, the idea of a subject, of a permanent «self», transmigrating from one existence to another¹⁵. But, in the Buddhistic sphere, the term also appears to be widely employed in its meaning (evidently by this time consolidated) of «condition», to indicate, that is to say, the five or – according to some texts – six conditions¹⁶ in which rebirth is possible¹⁷. Undoubtedly, however, in this sphere, the term has no connection with an immutable and eternal self, because Buddhism, as everybody knows, does not admit the idea of an «ego», of a permanent «self» that is the basis of the everlasting becoming and that, on the point of dying, transmigrates into another body. But, in my opinion, the term *gati*-, here, does not allude to the Buddhistic idea of the rebirth at all: it is determined from the use of the particle *eva* related to *tvam*, «you yourself», «you alone», in the last part of the verse, that is, from Śaṅkhacūḍa's wish to have again

tam āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim «The Unmanifest is also called *akṣara* ("The imperishable"); they call it the highest goal», and, moreover, *MDhŚ. VIII,88* where the word *gati*- is tightly connected with *ātman*: «The self (*ātman*) is *gati*- (the refuge) of the Self».

14. See, for example, *BhG. XVI,20* [...] *tato yānti adhamāṃ gatim* «[...] They then go down to the vilest state ».

15. See M. MONIER-WILLIAMS, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1964, repr. 1992 [1st ed. 1899], s.v. Moreover also for Jainism, admitting the existence of spiritual souls (*jīva*- "spiritual substance"), being infinite in number and eternal (cf. C. DELLA CASA, *Il Gianismo*, 1st ed., Torino, 1962, repr. 1993, p. 43), the word *gati*- signifies the four "states of life" in which the *jīvas* come into the world according to their *karman* (see, in particular, A. CHAKRAVARTI, "Jainism: Its Philosophy and Ethics", in *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. I, 2nd ed. rev. and enlarged, Calcutta, 1958 [1st Calcutta, 1937], p. 423).

16. See G. TUCCI, *op. cit.*, p. 104 and H. von GLASENAPP, *Le Religioni* cit., p. 212.

17. Cf. T.W. RHIS DAVIDS-W. STEDE, *Pali-English Dictionary*, London, 1966, s.v.; DINES ANDERSEN, *A Pali Reader. With notes and Glossary*, Kyoto, 1968, p. 86; and F. EDGERTON, *The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, 2vols., vol. II, 1st ed. New Haven, 1953, repr. Delhi, 1972, s.v.

that “very” woman as his mother in a next rebirth. According to Buddhism, indeed, the doctrine of rebirths never implies a transmigration, but rather a concatenated succession of states [of life] where every individual form is determined by the association of the *skandha*, “aggregates” of psychophysical factors (five for human beings, less for other beings), that, dissociating at the death of another individual form, of another being, are combined in consequence of *karman* of the dead. The *karman* is just the link between the old being and the new one; the latter therefore will not be completely different from the former, but not even completely equal: like a plant – using Giuseppe Tucci’s simile¹⁸ – that, arising from a seed, is not different from the plant that, formerly, had borne the seed, but, at the same time, is not even the same plant. In the rebirth – that is to say – there is continuity, but not identity. Man is a living compound continuously changing and not remaining the same for two subsequent moments; on his death, also the new group of *skandha* (that is, feelings, perceptions, frames of mind and so on, that join together to form the new being generated on the grounds of the *karman* of the deceased, whose *skandha* are dissolved) is ever-mutable, transitory, subject to incessant changes, submitted to becoming that is, in final analysis, a becoming something different: in other words, the new being, generated according to the *karman* of Śaṅkhacūḍa’s mother, however would never be the same as the mother. I think that the fact that *eva* refers to *tvam* in the text contains an explicit allusion that the whole passage must be related to the brahmanic ideology: only an unchangeable and permanent «self», that remains eternally the same as before, though transmigrating through the following existences, could guarantee the identity that Śaṅkhacūḍa seems to hope for.

Nāg. IV,10/11 is another very interesting passage. It, nevertheless, is not immediately connected with Śaṅkhacūḍa, but with the mother, though in final analysis, it would seem to relate both to Śaṅkhacūḍa and the *Nāgas* themselves to the hindu sphere. In the passage in question, Śaṅkhacūḍa’s elderly mother expresses her despair on Vāsuki, the king of the *Nāgas*, of the “Snakes”, who has chosen

18. G. Tucci, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

her very son as victim. She uses very strong words and concludes: *ha katham avicchinne jīvaloke mama putrakāḥ smṛtaḥ* («Ah!...how is it that in this vast world of mortals only my dear son was remembered [by you]?[...]»). The episode corresponds to *Kathās.* XII, 90, 123, but here the narration is obviously very concise: as a matter of fact the whole *Nāg.* IV,8-10/11 reduces itself to the conclusive question of the mother, that – it is really important to note it – sounds like this: *vistīrṇe nāgaloke 'pi dhātṛā nāgadhipena ca / labdhas tvam kim [...]* («How is it that, though the world of the Nāgas is wide, Destiny and the king [Vāsuki] have chosen you?[...]»). It is clear that, in the text of the *Nāgānanda*, the expression *jīvaloka-*, the «world of the creatures» or, more simply, “creatures, mortals”, has the place of what, in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, is *nāgaloka-*, «world of the Nāgas» or, more simply, “Nagas”. Why on earth – I wonder – is there this diversity? On the other hand, the hypothesis that here the author used *jīva-*, «creature», with the intention of speaking in general terms it is not wholly justifiable: as a matter of fact he is speaking about Śaṅkhacūḍa who is of course related to the race of the Nāgas. Well, if it is really the Nāgas to be individualized by the term *jīva-*, in that case, it is quite possible that this individualization is intentional. The word “*jīva-*”, «living, any living being, anything living», also means the «principle of life, vital breath, the living or personal soul»: the *jīva* is, i.e., the «living being» as «personal (or individual) soul» and it is beyond doubt that this implication is well-known to the Brahmanic tradition where the word means the individual «self», the spiritual part of man, that is limited by the body, is the agent of all activities and, therefore, is subject to the *saṃsāra*, even though it is not different from the universal soul, from the Absolute¹⁹. On the other hand, why did the

19. Besides the above mentioned dictionary of M. MONIER-WILLIAMS (s.v.), see also, among the many passages of the *Upaniṣads*, *Kaiv.Up.* 14: *punaś ca janmāntarakarmayogāt sa eva jīvaḥ svapiti prabuddhaḥ* «Again, on account of his connection with the deeds of his past life, the individual *jīva* comes to the state of dream and to the waking state». or *CUp.* VI, 11, 3: *jīvāpetam vava kiledam mriyate, na jīvo mriyate iti* «Verily, indeed, this body dies, when deprived of the living self, the living self does not die», since, as *CUp.* VI, 3, 2, informs us: *seyaṃ devataikṣata, hantāham imās tisro devatā anena jīvenātmanānupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaraṇāṇīti* «That divinity thought: “Well, let me enter into these three divinities by means of my living self

author make use of the term if it did not have a particular meaning, actually this very meaning? But, if we admit that the word *jīva-* had such a implication, we undoubtedly find difficult to connect it to the Buddhistic sphere, in spite of the well-known ambivalence of the Nāgas, that, according to H. Zimmer, allows us to connect them both to Hinduism and Buddhism²⁰. The Buddhism, where the idea of the transitoriness even concerns the soul of man, does not admit a permanent «self», an «ego», transmigrating on the point of dying into another body. As already mentioned, man is nothing but an aggregate of psychophysics elements continuously reproducing themselves and disappearing, like a flame that appears unchanged, whereas in reality it changes and is continuously different. It is solely in consequence of the velocity with which the spiritual processes reproduce themselves and in consequence of the rapidity with which they are following one another without a break that we have the sensation of a permanent being, remaining the same from birth to death. On this ground, therefore, I am of the opinion that the expression "*jīvaloka*" in the *Nāgānanda* had the sole aim to refer the Nāgas and Śaṅkhacūḍa himself to the hindu sphere. Besides, I happen to think that, while Harṣa had good grounds to introduce this expression, at least apparently Somadeva Sūri had no good reason to substitute the word *jīva-*, if it

and let me then develop names and forms"». That is to say, as in other words C. DELLA CASA remarks, «L'individualità (nome e forma) è costituita dall'unione del principio animatore con gli elementi cosmici da esso prodotti...» (*Upaniṣad*, Torino, 1976, repr. 1983, p. 243, nt. 4). Cf. also *KU*. II, 4, 5; *PraśUp*. V, 5 and, moreover, *ŚvUp*. V, 9, and especially the note – pertinent to this passage – of S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, 2nd London, 1968 [1st 1953], p. 741, according to whom *jīva* is the individual soul potentially infinite. See, finally, also that the word *jīva-* means in the *Bhagavadgītā* (cf. in particular *Bhg.* XIII, 33; XV, 7-8), which is so synthetized by S. TAPASYANANDA ("The religion of the *Bhagavadgītā*", in *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. II, 2nd Calcutta, 1962 [1st ed. 1937], repr. 1969, 1975, 1982, p. 167): *These Jīvas correspond to the Puruṣas in the Sāṃkhya system of thought ...the Gītā, too, accepts the multiplicity of the Jīvas (individual spirits), but adds that they are all aṃśas (parts) of the Universal Spirit enmeshed, as it were, in the physical and mental limitations imposed by the lower Nature (that is, as he shortly before tells exactly, the prakṛti, changeable and opposing by nature to the jīvas) ».*

20. H. ZIMMER, *Myths and symbols in indian art and civilisation*, 4th New York, 1963 [1st ed. 1946], pp. 59 ff. (= p. 60 ff. of the it. ed., with the title *Miti e simboli dell'India*, Milano, 1993).

had been in his source; all the more that, in that case, the term *jīva*- could have constituted a useful suggestion for avoiding an inelegant repetition (*nāgaloke* [...] *nāgadhipena*). Therefore, at this point, I could make the guess that the form *nāgaloke* of Somadeva Sūri actually repropose the source, while the expression *jīvaloke* was Harṣa's innovation.

Finally, Gokaṛṇa is mentioned in the *Nāgānanda* and, in my opinion, this is decidedly an important element. In *Nāg.* IV, 20/21, indeed, Śaṅkhacūḍa is said to go and pay homage to Gokaṛṇa²¹. Critics have not paid attention to the fact that Gokaṛṇa is mentioned in the text; actually, for some of them, it is a very unsuccessful expedient to which the author resorts to give to Jīmūtavāhana the opportunity of taking Śaṅkhacūḍa's place²². Certainly, the mentioning of Gokaṛṇa is disputable. Gokaṛṇa, indeed, is a locality lying about thirty miles from Malaya and it is very difficult for us to share the idea that Śaṅkhacūḍa, on the point of dying, thought of covering sixty miles (going there and back) before going to the place of agony. Besides, it is beyond doubt that this mention in the play impugns the unity of place, generally respected by Harṣa. Why on earth – I wonder – is just Gokaṛṇa mentioned here? On the other hand, the comparison with *Kathās.* XII, 90, 144-145, where the same geographical reference appears²³, let us come to the conclusion that the word "Gokaṛṇa" must have been already in the original source. Therefore, some scholars have formulated the hypothesis that Harṣa could have derived the name of the locality from the source inserting it in his play without checking where the place was exactly situated²⁴. This is very possible: the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, indeed, is a narrative work and, consequently, it

21. *Nāg.* IV, 20/21: *yāvad aham apy adūre bhagavantam daksinagokaṛṇam pradakṣinīkrtya svāmyādeśam anuṭiṣṭhāmi* «I too, in the meanwhile, shall go round the deity at the southern Gokaṛṇa nearby and then carry out the orders of my master».

22. A.V. TORASKAR-N.A. DESHPANDE, *op. cit.*, p. 31; B. KUN BAE, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

23. Cf. *Kathās.* XII, 90, 144: *aham cābdhitaṭam gatvā natvā gokaṛṇam īśvaram / āgacchāmi drutam* [...] «But I will go to the shore of the sea and worship the lord and quickly return [...], and 145: [...] *sa gokaṛṇapraṇāmārtham śaṅkhacūḍo yayau tataḥ* // «[...] and Śaṅkhacūḍa then went to pay his devotion to Gokaṛṇa».

24. See R.D. KARMAKAR, *op. cit.*, p. 28 and, in part, A.V. TORASKAR-N.A. DESHPANDE, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

was not subjected to the bond of unity of place. But, another hypothesis could be valid too: on the other hand, we have good grounds for hesitating to consider Harṣa inexperienced. Gokaṛṇa is indeed a well-known locality because there is a sanctuary dedicated to Śiva²⁵; actually, to tell the truth, it seems that there are two localities with this name, one lying in the north, in Nepal, the other, to which the author alludes here, is in the south. Both are places of pilgrimage and both are dedicated to Śiva²⁶, and it is at least unthinkable that a śaiva devotee, in addition learned and presumably well-informed, as Harṣa was, might not know it. If we hold it in due consideration, then it is not unlikely that he should have intentionally maintained the mention of Gokaṛṇa – even if he was conscious of the problems that this hint could have entailed –, just because it was clearly indicative Śaṅkhacūḍa's śaiva faith. But, I think that the coincidence of *Nāgānanda* with *Kathāsaritsāgara* could lead us to another interesting annotation: if the mention was already in the source, it is probable that the allusion to Śaṅkhacūḍa's śaiva faith should already be in the original tale. In that case, the two characters, i.e. Jīmūtavāhana and Śaṅkhacūḍa, would have already been the expressions of the two different faiths in the original. This, therefore, would show itself, long before Harṣa, as an example of the well-known tendency to the syncretism that seems to be characteristic of India where the more various conceptions, ideologies and traditions, which appear many a time quite in contrast between them, show themselves to be placed side by side and frequently even amalgamated, so as to flow together into a harmonious whole²⁷.

25. Cf. E.W. HOPKINS, *Epic Mythology*, in «Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde» III, I, B, Strassburg, 1915, p. 220; J. DOWSON, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, 11th London, 1968, s.v.; A. KUMAR ROY-N.N. GIDWANI, *A dictionary of Indology*, New Delhi-Bombay-Calcutta, 1984, s.v.

26. A.V. TORASKAR-N.A. DESHPANDE, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

27. On the other hand, it is possible that the source of the *Nāgānanda* is, as R. STEINER has already suggested, «*einer kaschmirischen Śaiva-version der Brhatkathā*» (see also above, note 2). More generally, about the tendency to the syncretism, see, for example, A. SANNINO PELLEGRINI, «*Avadhī in Prabodhacandrodaya* 1,7: una precisazione a proposito della crudeltà di Paraśurāma», in «*Ricostruzione culturale e Ricostruzione linguistica*» (Atti del Congresso del Circolo Glottologico Palermitano, Palermo 20-22 ottobre 1988), Palermo, 1991, pp.65-78, and, in particular, in relation

In conclusion, thinking all this over I should not hesitate to see Śaṅkhacūḍa as a representative of the hindu ideology. Certainly, as I have already said, it is difficult to decide which of these elements are to really ascribe to Harṣa and which were already in the original text, perhaps emphasized or magnified by Harṣa and, on the contrary, later lost or left under hand in the concise text of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. However, after all, it is beyond doubt that they would be, in the first case, the expression of Harṣa's religious tolerance or, in the second case, of a more general religious tolerance²⁸ that Harṣa, in his open and elastic mentality, took to himself so much so that it characterized his political and cultural attitude and so much so that he transfused it into his play. And in the *Nāgānanda*, Harṣa not only lets the canons of the Buddhist doctrine live together in accordance with the gods, the forms of cult, the attitudes of religious thought and the manners of life of Hinduism, but, in my opinion, also by characterizing the characters he aimed at harmonizing the two ideologies, Buddhism and Hinduism, placing Jīmūtavāhana and Śaṅkhacūḍa side by side without any contraposition: in their continuous competition of nobility and of loyalty, where, in reality, nobody is «superior», Harṣa has transposed his idea of religion.

to the *Nāgānanda*, O. BOTTO, "Letterature antiche dell'India", in *Le letterature d'Oriente*, vol. III, Milano, 1964, p. 243.

28. About the theme of the hindu religious tolerance, see P. HACKER, "Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus" in «Saeculum» 8 (1957), pp. 167-179 (repr. in P. HACKER, *Kleine Schriften*, hrsg. von L. Schmithausen, Wiesbaden, 1978, pp. 376-388); W. HALBFASS, "Inklusivismus und Toleranz im Kontext der indo-europäischen Begegnung", in *Inklusivismus. Eine indische Denkform*, hrsg. von G. Oberhammer, Wien, 1983, pp. 29-60 and, lastly, the study by C. DELLA CASA, "Aspetti del confronto fra religioni diverse nell'India antica", in C. DELLA CASA-P.A. CAROZZI, *Corso di Storia delle Religioni*, Milano, 1984, pp. 1-75, to which in particular I refer on account of a very wide bibliography.